

# Ofqual Board

## Paper 22/16

**Date:**

27 July 2016

**Title:**

Chief Regulator's Update

**Report by:**

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**Paper for information**

**Open paper (paragraphs 13-15 closed)**



### **Induction**

1. In my first three months I have immersed myself in an intensive induction process alongside beginning to oversee the delivery of outcomes outlined in the Directors' reports. I do not intend to duplicate commentary on that progress in this report, rather to provide the board with a flavour of my induction activity together with a summary of progress and main issues of substance about which the board needs to be aware. I also set out priorities for the next period.
2. My induction programme has had at its core immersion in assessment techniques and regulation alongside stakeholder engagement with schools, colleges, employers, representative groups such as ASCL, exam boards and other awarding organisations and of course the DfE including now former Ministers.
3. In my first weeks I have visited seven schools and colleges of all shapes and sizes, teaching a range of general and vocational qualifications. I have visited two major employers, Carillion and National Grid, which use qualifications in recruitment as well as to assess their apprentices. National Grid have been involved in developing the new, employer led, Trailblazer apprenticeships.
4. I have had meetings with key journalists and made my first formal speech as Chief Regulator at the Institute of Education on June 29<sup>th</sup> to

around 50 stakeholders including head teachers, exam board staff and journalists. The half day event also allowed us to trail some groundbreaking research into the quality of marking which we expect to launch later in the year [Section redacted - publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.]

## **Overall Progress**

### **General qualifications**

#### **Accreditation**

5. All specifications to be taught from September 2016 have now been accredited. Reaching this point has taken an immense amount of work by the team and they should be credited for this achievement.
6. Many lessons have been learned, however Accreditation will remain a key challenge for the organisation in the next six months. Changes to our accreditation processes for 2017 subjects have already led to exam boards receiving our decisions faster, although the workload continues to be considerable and we are dependent on exam boards meeting their commitments to timing. For September 2017 we expect to consider over a hundred specifications.
7. Paragraph redacted - publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.
8. Paragraph redacted - publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.
9. Overall the summer series of examinations has so far run without a major incident. Event notifications are slightly up on last year at 91 compared to 75 in 2015 mainly due to paper errors, and potentially reflects the increased number of papers this year. This appears to be a small number, however these notifications vary significantly between boards and only materialise where 'harm' might or had occurred. National media attention was attracted on a handful of occasions resulting from social media activity by students commenting on the difficulty and scope of some exams. We investigated where necessary and did not find anything significant at that stage although we will monitor at awarding stage.
10. Paragraph redacted - publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.
11. Marking appears to be progressing well and we have not been alerted to any significant delays. I have observed two awarding meetings (one run by OCR and one by Pearson) where key grade boundaries are set.
12. As we prepare for results we will be looking particularly closely at the new and legacy AS awarding together with iGCSEs and modern

foreign languages. It will be important to be proactive in our messaging so avoid misunderstanding.

## **Vocational qualifications**

13. Closed paragraph - relates to the development of public policy and are withheld from publication because publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.
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## **Communications**

16. We have published a significant quantity of material since the last board including responses to consultations, research material, official statistics on awarding and vocational qualifications, blogs and news releases.
17. Some of our material is necessarily complex and technical and we are working hard to translate it where appropriate into digestible and easily readable formats. We have published to all schools for example a text guide, slides and updated postcards covering exactly what Ofqual does, the reform programme and a guide to this summer's reviews and appeals. We have also published for the first time 'key facts' in bitesize statements about reviews and appeals.
18. Paragraph redacted - publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

## **Staff**

19. The recent interim pulse survey indicates that staff sentiment is improving with many areas showing five or more point improvements. If this trend continues the overall staff engagement score at the end of the year should rise.
20. Paragraph redacted - publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

## **Priorities for the Next period**

21. My immediate priorities for the next few months will be to deal with any awarding challenges and seek to ensure the new system for reviews and appeals is smoothly implemented and evaluated. In addition, we must keep our focus on 2017 Accreditation.

- 22. On Tech Education we need to continue our good work on an implementable proposition to support Sainsbury and short term action on validity of qualifications.
- 23. Whilst our work on communicating changes to GCSE grading have borne fruit with teachers (as evidenced by the latest perceptions survey) we now need to move post this summer to communicating for colleges, parents and employers. [Sentence redacted - publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.]
- 24. In the longer term I want to take a more strategic look at what the organisation needs to achieve each quarter to deliver our corporate plan and how we will know if we have been successful. Our communications can then centre around particular campaigns with reach and impact targets. [Sentence redacted - publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.]

Paper to be published	YES
Publication date (if relevant)	After meeting
If it is proposed not to publish the paper or to not publish in full please outline the reasons why with reference to the exemptions available under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), please include references to specific paragraphs	Paragraphs 13-15 relate to the development of public policy and are withheld from publication because publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.